
FSIS is Recruiting

Food Inspectors

Protecting Public Health

GS-1863-5 and 7

Competition Notice

Announcement Number: UM188899

Issued March 2004. This supersedes previous Competition Notices.

Open Continuously – Applications are currently being accepted for Food Inspector positions nationwide. Certain locations and grades may close periodically. Amendments to this announcement will be available when locations or grades close.

USDA is an Equal Employment Opportunity employer. All qualified applications will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status.

Protecting Public Health

You can make a difference! Americans enjoy the safest food supply in the world, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) today is even more committed to raising the standard of food safety in a global environment. This is why we need bright, energetic, and committed people like you to carry out the mission of FSIS to protect consumers here at home, and abroad, by ensuring that the meat, poultry and egg products supply is safe, wholesome and properly labeled. USDA's only public health regulatory agency offers great opportunities for future merit-based promotion, career enhancement and professional development.

FSIS employs thousands of Inspectors. Each year, we hire several hundred new inspectors. Read on to learn more about the job and how to apply. Consider joining the USDA team!

The Work of a Food Inspector

Entry-level positions filled through this announcement usually work in slaughter plants. Your role as a new Inspector would be to examine food animals in privately-owned meat or poultry plants. You would ensure that the product is fit to eat and in compliance with Federal laws. Inspection is performed before and after slaughter to ensure that the product is not contaminated and that sanitation procedures are maintained.

For most Inspectors, however, this is just the start of their career. The majority of our Inspectors are eventually promoted into positions that inspect processed meat and poultry products. This includes frozen dinners, canned goods, and cured and smoked products. In processing plants, an Inspector reviews, verifies and monitors plant operations and records, and determines compliance with regulations. Many career paths are possible.

As a Federal official, you will be required to uphold the integrity of the regulatory process. You will acquire the skills necessary to balance the industry's desire for productivity against the public's right to protection against unsafe or inferior food products.

Key Questions to Consider As You Read This Announcement

Are you interested in this type of work?

Does the benefits package meet your needs?

Are you a U.S. Citizen?

Do you meet the qualification requirements?

Do you meet the physical requirements?

We encourage you to read this cover to cover before moving forward. However, if you've read this notice, and you can answer "Yes" to the five questions listed above, then you are ready to apply by following the detailed instructions on page 7! We welcome your application.

Location of Positions

Positions are located throughout the United States and Puerto Rico, at plants ranging from small facilities to large mechanized assembly line operations. Plants are located both in metropolitan areas and rural locations, close to animal supply sources. When applying online, you will be asked to identify up to five areas where you are willing to work. You should list only areas where you are truly interested in working. If selected for a Food Inspector position, any move you request to a different location is likely to take two or more years.

Training

Inspector trainees receive on-the-job training in the rules, regulations, techniques, and responsibilities of the position. Those assigned to slaughter inspection are trained to detect abnormalities in live animals, as well as head, viscera and carcass irregularities.

Grade Levels / Salary / Bonuses

Food Inspector positions are filled at the GS-5 or GS-7 grade levels. ("GS" stands for "General Schedule" – the pay schedule for most government employees.) If you are appointed at the GS-5 level, you will be eligible for promotion to GS-7 after one year of satisfactory performance. To find out current salary levels for employees at the GS-5 and GS-7 grade levels, you may wish to explore federal salary information at <http://www.opm.gov/oca/04tables/indexGS.asp>.

Most of our Agency's Inspector positions are above the GS-7 grade level, so there are plenty of opportunities for Agency employees to apply and compete for higher grade levels. This announcement covers entry-level positions, however, and only occasionally do the positions filled under this announcement have promotion potential to the GS-8 or GS-9 grade levels. It's also very important to note that **Recruitment Bonuses of \$2,500 or higher are available in some locations!** Details are available at our website www.foodsafetyjobs.gov. Just click on "Food Inspector" to go to the area with recruitment bonus information.

Benefits Package

Did you know that working for the federal government has many advantages?

We offer paid vacation, sick leave, and federal holidays. (Depending upon the work requirements at your assigned industry facility, you may be required to work some overtime or on some Federal holidays.) We offer various health and life insurance options. We have a tax-deferred retirement system with matching funds, and opportunity for career advancement. For some locations, we offer recruitment bonuses and government paid relocation. Our family-friendly policies outshine those in the private sector. To explore the benefits of being a federal employee in more detail, you may wish to explore <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/ei61.asp>.

Qualification Requirements

You can qualify based on either education OR experience, but not a combination of the two.

Qualifying at the GS-5 level based on EXPERIENCE:

To qualify at the GS-5 level based on experience you must have one year specialized experience that was obtained after your 16th birthday. The experience must show qualifying knowledge, judgment, interpretive ability, and technical skills. Your experience must be related to a finished product where there are specific standards. **You must provide specific examples to show that you qualify.** Specialized experience includes, but is not limited to, the following examples:

1. Work experience **processing food**, in a slaughter or processing plant, or a comparable production activity which prepares food for human consumption. This experience should demonstrate skills in sorting good from bad; applying, interpreting, and explaining standards, making decisions, and communicating with others. Non-technical repetitive functions are not qualifying.
2. Work experience as a **meat cutter/butcher** in a wholesale or retail meat/poultry business. This experience must include a full range of responsible duties are performed such as cutting or butchering, sanitation, dealing with customers, meeting customer standards, use of judgment, interpretation of various requirements, and sorting acceptable from unacceptable. Deli slicing and assembly of sandwich items or meat wrapping are not qualifying.
3. Work experience performing **Quality Control tests and/or laboratory tests**. This experience must be in the food industry or other similar environments, working with products that are consumed by humans or animals.
4. Work experience as a **manager or supervisor in the food or livestock industry**. This experience in the food industry must demonstrate effective skills in communicating job requirements, evaluating results of work methods or processes, applying instructions, and interpreting standards or instructions.
5. Work experience **preparing food**, as a chef or cook in a large-scale commercial establishment. This experience must demonstrate responsibility for proper food preparation, handling and sanitation practices. Fast food experience as a grill attendant, serving line attendant, or cashier does not demonstrate possession of these skills.
6. Work experience as a **Veterinary Technician**. This experience must include conducting lab tests, assessing animals and/or partial examination of animals, performing autopsies, monitoring animals under anesthesia or other Vet Tech work involving standards and decisions.

Qualifying at the GS-5 level based on EDUCATION:

You may qualify at the GS-5 level based on successful completion of a full 4-year course of study leading to a bachelor's degree in an accredited college or university, that included 12 semester hours in the biological, physical, mathematical, or agricultural sciences. Those within 9 months of graduating may apply. **(To receive credit for your college degree, you must provide a copy of your school transcript. See "How to Apply" for mailing instructions.)**

Qualifying at the GS-7 level:

To qualify at the GS-7 level, applicants must have one year of full-time regulatory experience as a state, federal or military food inspector. Education cannot be substituted for experience to qualify above the GS-5 level.

Qualifying experience must involve either ante- or post-mortem inspection of meat, poultry or seafood; OR inspection of processed products involving meat, poultry, seafood or egg products. It must also demonstrate the following knowledge and ability:

- Knowledge of general sanitation practices, laws and regulations governing the food industry;
- Knowledge of Federal laws and regulations pertaining to fitness of red meat animals, poultry, fish, or seafood for human consumption; or knowledge of Federal laws and regulations applicable to the processing of red meat, poultry, fish, seafood, or egg products; AND
- Ability to communicate effectively with supervisors and workers in the food industry.

Basis of Rating – Online Questionnaire

You will be rated based on your answers to an online questionnaire. This questionnaire is designed to measure competencies that have been identified as being important to succeed as a Food Inspector. Qualifying applicants are referred and considered, in score order, as vacancies occur.

Physical Requirements

As an Inspector you will work in highly mechanized plant environments near operating machinery with moving parts, in confined areas, in extreme temperatures and on slippery floors. You must be physically and mentally able to perform the job functions, without hazard to yourself or others.

A more complete list of the physical requirements will be provided to those who are tentatively selected for a Food Inspector position. The examples listed below, although not all inclusive, provide details on the physical requirements.

Full range of motion is required for rapid repetitive twisting and working with arms above shoulder level as well as standing and walking on slippery and uneven floors and catwalks, and climbing stairs and ladders. Applicants must be able to lift, carry, push and pull up to 30 pounds with occasional lifting of up to 50 pounds. Dexterity of the upper body, including arms, hands, and fingers with a normal sense of touch in both hands is mandatory. Applicants must be free of chronic eye disease, have good near and distance vision. Any significant degree of color blindness is disqualifying. Any disease or condition which interferes with the ability to hear or with equilibrium may be considered disqualifying.

Citizenship Requirements

Under Federal Law, only U.S. citizens or those owing permanent allegiance to the United States (e.g., Natives of American Samoa as a group) may compete in Federal civil service examinations to receive appointments in the competitive civil service. If you are not a U.S. Citizen, we cannot accept your application.

Conflict of Interest Policy

The Food Safety and Inspection Service prohibits the assignment of employees to any establishment where existing circumstances might prevent impartial performance of assigned duties. Such a situation is considered a conflict of interest.

There are many situations that may pose a Conflict of Interest. Not all are listed here. The following examples are specifically prohibited situations:

1. An appointment to perform official inspection or related duties at an establishment where you have been employed during the past year.
2. An appointment to any establishment which employs a member of your immediate family (i.e., parent, spouse, child, or sibling) or which employs other family members living in your household. These include immediate family in-laws, stepparents, stepchildren, grandparents and grandchildren.
3. An appointment to perform these duties at an establishment, tenant, or subsidiary thereof, from which you receive an annuity or pension.
4. An appointment to any establishment which employs your family member (above) in a supervisory, managerial, or policy making capacity, even if that person does not live in your household.

Other Important Information

- The law prohibits political recommendations from members of Congress, elected state and local government officials, or others based on political affiliation.
- If you are eligible for reinstatement (e.g. a former federal employee with career status), you may wish to apply as a non-competitive eligible. More information on this option is available at our website and the Office of Personnel Management website www.opm.gov.
- If you receive a Federal annuity (military and civilian), your salary or annuity may be reduced if you accept a Federal job.
- Law prohibits public officials from appointing, promoting, or recommending their relatives.

- If you are a male over age 18 who was born after December 31, 1959, you must have registered with the Selective Service System (or have an exemption) to be eligible for a Federal job.
- Information obtained during the application process is collected in accordance with the provisions of the Privacy Act.
- If you accept a Federal job, and have delinquent debts, we are required to garnish your salary if served with a court-ordered garnishment for child support or commercial debts.
- Veteran's Preference: You may be eligible for veteran's preference if you served in the United States Military and received an honorable or general discharge. Not all military service confers veteran's preference, however. Also, if eligible, a DD-214 must be mailed to the Human Resources Office listed in the "How to Apply" section of this notice. More information on Veteran's Preference is available at our website and the Office of Personnel Management website www.opm.gov.

Career Transition Assistance Plan/Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP/ICTAP)

Displaced or surplus USDA employees and other displaced Federal employees who apply for this announcement and are determined well-qualified, will be given special selection priority consideration for their local commuting area, as appropriate. Current or former employees on USDA's Reemployment Priority List (RPL) who are within the local commuting area need not apply to be considered. Well-qualified candidates are those who meet the qualifications and eligibility requirements for the position, including any medical qualifications. Applicants must also meet the "fully acceptable" or equivalent level for each knowledge, skill, and ability listed.

To receive selection priority, USDA displaced or surplus employees and displaced Federal employees (except USDA RPL candidates noted above) must submit an application, a copy of their most recent performance appraisal (at least "fully successful" or equivalent), and proof of eligibility, e.g., a RIF separation notice, Certification of Expected Separation, etc.

Equal Employment Opportunity

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

How to Apply

Visit our website at www.foodsafetyjobs.gov. Click on “Food Inspector” and then follow the step by step instructions that include the following four steps.

STEP ONE: CAREFULLY REVIEW THE JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

At our website you will find a link to the complete announcement. You will want to review it carefully before proceeding.

STEP TWO: COMPLETE THE ONLINE OCCUPATIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE

At our website you will also find a link to the online questionnaire. In the “Create a New Application for This Job” panel, enter the vacancy ID# UM188899, click “Submit” and follow the series of prompts to complete the questionnaire.

STEP THREE: CREATE AND SUBMIT AN APPLICATION OR RESUME

Tell us more about yourself and your work experience by creating and submitting an application or resume. But before you begin preparing an application or resume, please consider these tips:

- ✓ List information on all jobs that are relevant.
- ✓ Provide specific and detailed information about your duties. Make sure you completely and fully address the types of qualifying experience shown on page 3 of this notice.
- ✓ Include all starting and ending dates (month/year), plus the number of hours per week, for each job you’ve held.

The full job announcement describes a number of options. Simply choose the one that works best for you. Assistance for each of the options, including necessary forms and web links, is provided at our website. Regardless of the option you choose, we recommend that you keep an extra copy for your records.

Hard copy applications/resumes may be mailed to the address shown below.

-OR-

Resumes may be e-mailed to us at foodinspectorapps@fsis.usda.gov.

-OR-

You may wish create and send a resume online.

STEP FOUR: SUBMIT ADDITIONAL MATERIALS, IF REQUIRED

After you’ve completed the online questionnaire and submitted an application or resume, the application process may be finished. However, if you are qualifying based on your education, or you are eligible for veteran’s preference, you should submit additional materials. Copies of school transcripts or veteran’s preference information should be mailed to the following address:

USDA, Food Safety and Inspection Service
HRFO – Examining Systems Section
Butler Square West, Suite 420C
100 North Sixth Street
Minneapolis, MN 55403

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

Q: How do I get information about working for FSIS as a Food Inspector?

A: You can find information on our website at www.foodsafetyjobs.gov or by calling our office to request information. (1-800-370-3747, extension 2820)

Q: How do you apply online for entry-level Food Inspector positions?

A: Applicants may apply online by answering questions about their background and qualifications, and providing a resume or application form. Then, as vacancies occur, applicants are referred and considered for locations where they have shown an interest.

Q: Once I have applied, how long will it take before I get a response?

A: A "thank you" message is displayed after you submit your online occupational questionnaire. After you have submitted your complete application, you can expect to receive a Notice of Results in the mail in 4-8 weeks. This Notice of Results will provide information on the results of our evaluation and the status of your application.

Q: Why is FSIS using a new online occupational questionnaire as the assessment tool?

A: The new assessment tool is fast and flexible. It allows us to better meet Agency staffing needs. Applicants have found it much easier to apply under this new application system.

Q: Is the new online assessment tool the same as the old exam?

A: No, the new assessment was recently developed by a team of industrial psychologists with the Office of Personnel Management. The assessment consists of questions addressing important competencies for the Food Inspector occupation.

Q: Is the new assessment tool accurate and valid?

A: Yes. This new assessment tool was developed by Office of Personnel Management (OPM) experts in test applicant design. To develop this tool, they conducted a job analysis of the Food Inspector occupation by gathering data regarding food inspection tasks, determining important competencies needed to perform food inspection work, and determining specific behaviors which are indicative of successful job performance. From this comprehensive data, OPM prepared a series of questions which address important job competencies for the food inspection occupation.

Q: Is my old test score any good?

A: Once the new system is operational, the old scores will no longer be used to determine whether or not you can be considered for a food inspector job. You must apply under the new system to be considered for vacancies.

Q: What will you base my score on?

A: Responses to each question in the assessment are weighted and based on the competencies needed to perform food inspection work. The more closely answers match the typical answers of a highly successful Food Inspector, the higher the score.

Q: Will scores still range from 70 to 100?

A: Yes, passing scores on the assessment range from 70 to 100, not including points added in for veteran's preference. An applicant must receive a passing score on the assessment (also referred to as the online occupational questionnaire) to be considered for Food Inspector positions.

Q: May I retake the assessment (online questionnaire) to try for a higher score?

A: Individuals must wait one year before retaking the assessment tool. Because the occupational questions relate so closely to personal experience and personal preferences, answers are not likely to vary a great deal over a period of time less than one year. Applicants who submit new answers to the occupational questions, after the one year waiting period has passed, may be required to provide documentation and justification regarding discrepancies between their original answers and their updated answers. If the updated answers result in a lower rating, the person retaking the assessment will receive a lower rating. If the updated answers result in a failing score, the person retaking the assessment will be rated ineligible.

Q: What will I do if I don't have access to a computer?

A: Most public libraries, college placement offices, employment offices, and community centers have computers and Internet access for patrons at no charge. We strongly encourage individuals to find computer access through one of these public resources, or through a friend or family member. By applying online you can help ensure that the application is processed quickly. This will help you avoid missing an important job opportunity.

Q: What if I have reviewed this notice and these FAQ's, and I am still having difficulty applying online?

A: You may wish to contact someone in Examining Systems at 1-800-370-3747. They are available to answer questions and discuss alternatives to online application.